

THRIX DOHERTY, 1891 (INSECTA, LEPIDOPTERA, LYCAENIDAE):
PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF A TYPE-SPECIES UNDER THE
PLENARY POWERS. Z.N.(S.) 1768

By Lt. Col. C. F. Cowan
(*Little Gaddesden House, Berkhamsted, Herts, England*)

The generic name *Thrix* was based by Doherty (1891 : 35) on the very distinctive males from Malaya (and Sumatra) of an insect which he misidentified as *Neucheritra gama* Distant (1886 : 462, fig.) from Malaya, of which only the female was then known.

His error was not rectified till Corbet (*op. posth.* 1948 : 96) pointed out that, among other details, the true male of *gama* Distant had a normal smooth fore-wing upperside, unlike Doherty's males with their distinctive large orange-pink brush; moreover the true *gama* male lacked the fifth subcostal vein in the fore-wing described for *Thrix* by Doherty, a vein which the latter had correctly guessed would be found lacking in the females of both species.

In fact the male of *gama* Distant had been well described under the name *Sithon teunga* Grose Smith (1889 : 317) from Kina Balu, N.E. Borneo; a name which has almost but not quite been lost and of which *licinius* H. H. Druce (1896 : 677, fig.), type-species of *Mantoides* H. H. Druce (*idem*) from the same place is a synonym. A third subspecies to *gama* and *teunga* is *Thrix myrmecus* Seitz (1926 : 992, fig.) from "Borneo", and a fourth *Jacoona maga* Corbet (*l.c.*) from Burma. Seitz said *Thrix* bore the tuft but included in it both *gama* and *licinius myrmecus*; he lost *Mantoides* and could not place *teunga* (*l.c.* : 991).

Reverting to *Thrix gama* sens. Doherty nec Distant, with the unique tuft-bearing males; there are again four named taxa. The earliest which conforms in structure to Doherty's males was *Hypolycaena cloella* Weymer (1887 : 10, fig.) from Nias Island, and the second *Neucheritra nisibis* de Nicéville (1895 : 316, ♀, fig.) from Malaya (and Sumatra). But earlier *Sithon scopula* H. Druce (1873 : 352, poor fig.) had been described from Borneo, and finally *Virgarina scopula* Frühstorfer (1913 : 175) came from S.E. Borneo. Surprisingly, males of the last two always lack the extra costal vein on the forewing, but their appearance is similar and the tuft is borne. Certainly the first two are conspecific and it is arguable (*vide* Corbet *l.c.*, and I agree) that the third and senior taxon, and likewise the fourth, are too. It happens that a further genus, *Virgarina* H. H. Druce (1895 : 606), was created for *scopula*. Seitz lost *sankilia*, but included the rest in *Thrix*.

Corbet (*l.c.*) placed seven small genera whose males are diverse in the one genus *Jacoona* Distant (1884 : 233, 241), finding the females structurally similar. This is not necessarily a universally acceptable view, however, and it is most desirable to rectify the anomaly of the type-species of *Thrix* against the time when a detailed revision of the tribe can be undertaken.

Treated literally, true *gama* Distant would be the type-species of *Thrix* Doherty, rendering *Mantoides* H. H. Druce a subjective synonym.

Treated factually, either *scopula*, *cloella*, or *nisibis* should be selected. Corbet suggested *scopula*. As Doherty had before him Malayan specimens, *nisibis* is preferable, the more so since *scopula*, as we have seen, is slightly aberrant. The only weakness of *nisibis* is that it was described from two females only. But there is no doubt now on the identity of this well illustrated taxon. The result of fixing *nisibis* deNicéville as the type-species of *Thrix* Doherty would be to render *Virgarina* H. H. Druce a subjective synonym. It is already so regarded (Corbet *l.c.*, et al.), and has not been used for over 50 years.

It is preferable, for stability, and incidentally preserving *Mantoides* which is still in use, to treat this problem factually by recognising Doherty's misidentification and adopting *nisibis* as the type-species of *Thrix*, rather than literally, perpetuating the misidentification and adhering to *gama* as the type-species. The Greek feminine word θρίξ, anyway, means the hair or beard, so is most appropriate to *nisibis* but quite absurd for the smooth-faced *gama*.

The International Commission is therefore requested to take the following action:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to set aside all designations of type-species for the genus *Thrix* Doherty, 1891, made prior to the ruling now proposed and, having done so, to designate as type-species of that genus the species *Neucheritra nisibis* deNicéville, 1895;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the generic name *Thrix* Doherty, 1891, *J. Asiatic Soc. Bengal* 60 (2) : 35 (gender : feminine), type-species by designation under the plenary powers in (1) above, *Neucherita nisibis* deNicéville, 1895, *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 9 : 316, pl. P, fig. 45;
- (3) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the specific name *nisibis* deNicéville, 1895, as published in the binomen *Neucheritra nisibis* (type-species of *Thrix* Doherty 1891).

REFERENCES

- CORBET, A. S. 1948. *Proc. R. ent. Soc. Lond. (B)* 17
 DISTANT, W. L. 1882-6. *Rhop. Malayana* London
 DOHERTY, W. 1891. *J. Asiatic Soc. Bengal* 60 (2)
 DRUCE, H. 1873. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* 1873
 DRUCE, H. H. 1895. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* 1895 (3). (October)
 — 1896. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* 1896
 FRUHSTORFER, H. 1913. *Dt. ent. Z. Iris* 27 (4)
 GROSE SMITH, H. 1889. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (6) 3
 DE NICÉVILLE, L. 1895. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 9. (3). (March)
 SEITZ, A. 1926. *Grossschmett. Erde* 9. Stuttgart
 WEYMER, G. 1887. *Stettin. ent. Z.* 48